"'HOW DO, ENGLISH!'"

AN OLD-TIME THANKSGIVING.

By M. Eloise Talbot.

Little Prudence stood by the window, with her face pressed hard against it. She was not looking out; she could not do that, for the window-frame, instead of being filled with clear panes of glass, had oiled paper stretched tightly across it.

It was a very curious window, indeed, and it transmitted a dull light into a very curious room. The floor was of uncovered boards; the walls were built of logs of wood with the bark still clinging to them in places, and overhead were great rafters from which hung suspended many things — swords and corselets, coats, bundles of dried herbs, pots and pans.

The furniture was very simple. In the center of the room was a wooden table, scoured to whiteness, stiff-backed chairs were ranged against the wall, and a dresser, where pewter cups and platters stood in shining rows, adorned the farther corner. In a wide chimney-place a royal fire was blazing, and before it stood Prudence's mother, carefully stirring some mixture in an iron pot which hung upon a crane. Within the circle of the firelight, which played upon her yellow hair and turned it to ruddy gold, Mehitable, Prudence's sister, stepped rapidly to and fro, her spinning-wheel making a humming accompaniment to the crackling of the blaze.

Prudence turned to watch her, pushing farther back a little white cap which pressed upon her short curls; for she was a little Puritan maiden, living in the town of Plymouth, and it was not the present year of our Lord, but about two hundred and seventy-five years ago. She was a very different Prudence from what she would have been if she had been living now, and it was a very different Plymouth from the pleasant town we know to-day, with its many houses climbing up the hill, and the busy people in its streets. There were only seven houses then, and they stood in one line leading to the water, and there was but one building besides — a square wooden affair with palisades, which served as a church on Sundays, a fort when enemies were feared, and a storehouse all the time. Beyond these nothing could be seen but woods — trackless, unknown forests — and, away to the east, the ocean, where the waves were booming with a lonesome sound.

It was not quite a year before that Prudence's father had stood with the other brave colonists on the deck of the "Mayflower," and had looked with eager eyes upon the shore of the

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New World. This first year in Massachusetts had on the whole been a happy one for Prudence. During the cold winter which followed their landing, she had indeed cast longing thoughts toward the home in Holland which they had left; and especially did she long for the Dutch home when she was hungry, and the provisions which had been brought on the ship were scanty; but she had forgotten all such longings in the bounty given by the summer, and now it seemed to her there was no more beautiful place in the world than this New England.

It was Prudence's father who opened the door and came in, carrying on his shoulder an ax with which he had been felling trees for the winter's fuel. Prudence never could get over the queer feeling it gave her to see her father thus employed. When they lived in Holland, he was always writing and studying in books of many languages, but here he did little else than work in the fields, for it was only so that the early settlers obtained their daily bread. He leaned his ax in a corner, and came toward the fire, rubbing his hands to get out the cold.

"I have news for you, dear heart, to-night," he said to his wife. "I have just come from the granary, and, indeed there is goodly store laid up of corn and rye, and game that has been shot in the forest. The children's mouths will not hunger this winter."

"Praised be the Lord!" replied his wife, fervently. "But what is your news?"

"The governor hath decided to hold a thanksgiving for the bountiful harvest, and on the appointed day is a great feast to be spread; and he hath sent a messenger to bid Massasoit to break bread with us."

"Massasoit the Indian?"

"Ay; but a friendly Indian. He will come, and many of his braves with him. You will be kept busy, my heart, with the other housewives to bake sufficient food for this company."

"Oh, mother, may I — *may* I go?" cried Prudence, her eyes dancing with excitement, clutching at her mother's skirts; but her father continued:

"How now, Mehitable? The news of a coming feast does not seem to make you merry as it was wont to do in Holland."

Mehitable was grave, and there was even a tear in her eye.

"I know," cried Joel, who was two years older than Prudence; "she is thinking of John Andrew, who is across the sea."

But the father frowned, and the mother said, "Peace, foolish children!" as she placed the porridge on the table.

So Prudence and Joel drew up their benches, and said no more. Chairs and conversation did not belong to children in those days; they sat on little stools and kept silence. That did not keep them from thinking. A thanksgiving feast! What could it be? The only thanksgiving they knew about meant such long prayers in church that the little people grew very tired before the end — but a feast! — that would be something new and interesting.

The feast was to be held on the following Thursday; so, during all the days between, the house was full of the stir of brewing and baking. Prudence polished the apples, and Joel pounded the corn, in eager anticipation; but when the day arrived a cruel disappointment awaited them, for their father decreed that they should remain at home.

"You are over young, my little Prudence, and Joel is over bold; besides which, he must stay and care for you."

"And do neither of you leave the house while your father and I are away," added the mother. "I shall not have a moment's peace of mind, if I think you are wandering outside alone."

"I will bring you back a Dutch cake, my little sister," whispered Mehitable, who looked sweeter than ever in her best attire of black silk and a lace kerchief, which with an unwilling heart she had put on in obedience to her mother's command.

But when the elders were gone the disappointment and loneliness were too much for the children. Prudence, being a girl, sat down in a corner and cried; while Joel, being a boy, got angry, and strode up and down the room with his hands in his pockets.

"It is too bad!" he burst out suddenly. "The greedy, grown-up people, I believe they want all the food themselves! It 's a downright shame to keep us at home!"

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"Joel!" gasped Prudence, horrified — "father and mother!"

"Well, I know," admitted Joel, more mildly; "but at least, they need not have shut us up in the house as if we were babies. Prudence, let 's go out in the yard and play, if we can't do anything else."

"But mother forbade us," said Prudence.

"I know. But then, of course, she only meant we must not go into the woods for fear of wild beasts. There is no danger here by the doorsteps, and father won't care; *he 's* not afraid!"

"I — don't — know," faltered Prudence.

"Well, *I 'm* going, any way," said Joel, resolutely, taking his hat from the peg. "Ah, do come too, Prudence!" he added persuasively.

So Prudence, though she knew in her heart it was a naughty thing to do, took off her cap, and tying her little Puritan bonnet under her chin, followed Joel through the door.

Once outside, I am afraid their scruples were soon forgotten. All the sunshine of the summer and the sparkling air of the winter were fused together to make a wonderful November day. The children felt like colts just loosed, and ran and shouted together till, if there had not been a good deal of noise also at the stone house where the feast was being spread, their shrill little voices must surely have been heard there.

All at once Joel caught Prudence by the arm.

"Hush!" he exclaimed. "Look!"

A beautiful gray squirrel ran across the grass in front of them. It stopped. poising its little head and intently listening.

"I 'm going to catch him," whispered Joel excitedly. "Father said if I could catch one, he would make me a cage for it. Come along."

He tiptoed softly forward, but the squirrel heard and was up and away in an instant. Joel pursued, and Prudence ran after him. Such a chase as the little creature gave them — up on the fence, under the stones, across the fields, and finally straight to the woods, with the children panting and stumbling after, still keeping him in sight. Breath and patience gave out at last; but when they stopped, where were they? In the very heart of the forest, where the dead leaves rustled, and the sunlight slanted down upon them, and the squirrel, safe in the top of a tree, chattered angrily.

"Never saw — anything run — so fast," panted Joel in disgust. "I — give — him up. We had better go back, Prudence. Why — but — I don't think I know the way!"

Prudence's lip quivered, and her eyes filled.

"That 's just like a girl!" said Joel, harshly, "to go and cry the first thing."

"I don't care," cried Prudence, indignation burning away her tears; "you brought me into this, anyhow, Joel, and now you ought to get me out."

This was so obviously true that Joel had no retort at hand. Besides, he did not like to see Prudence unhappy. So, after a moment, he put his arm around her.

"Never mind, Prue," he said; "I think if we try together, we can find the way home."

But though they walked until their feet were weary, they could find no familiar spot.

When they came out of the woods at last, it was only to find themselves unexpectedly on the sandy beach of the ocean. They sat down on two stones, and looked at each other in silence. Joel began to feel even his bravery giving way. All at once they heard a sound of soft feet, and a low, sweet voice said:

"How do, English!"

A little Indian boy stood before them. He wore a garment of skins, and a tiny bow and quiver hung upon his back. His feet were bare, and he walked so lightly that the children could hardly hear his tread. Prudence, in fright, shrank close to her brother; but Joel had seen many Indians during their year in the New World, and the stranger's eyes were so bright and soft that the white boy returned the Indian's salutation. Then, plunging his hand into his pocket, Joel brought forth a handful of nut-meats, and held them out for an offering.

The little Indian smiled delightedly, and politely took a few — not all. Having munched the kernels gravely, the new-comer began to dance.

It was a most remarkable dance. It was first a stately measure, accompanied by many poisings on his toes, and liftings of his head, from which the wind blew back his straight black hair; but gradually his motions grew

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faster and more furious, his slow steps changed to running, he turned, he twisted his lithe body into all possible contorted shapes, he threw his arms high above his head, waving them wildly, he took great leaps into the air, and finally, when his dance had lasted about fifteen minutes, several amazing somersaults brought him breathless, but still smiling, to the children's feet.

His spectators had been shouting with delight during the whole performance, and now asked him eager questions. What was his name? How did he learn to dance? Could he not speak any more English? But to all their inquiries he only shook his head, and at last sat down beside them, motionless now as any little bronze statue, and looked steadily out to sea.

Prudence's head drooped upon her brother's shoulder.

"I 'm rather tired, Joel," she said, wistfully; "don't you think we could get to Plymouth pretty soon?"

"I don't know," said Joel, despondently.

At the words the Indian boy sprang to his feet. He ran toward the woods, then stopped, and beckoned them to follow.

"He is going in the wrong direction, I am sure," said Joel, shaking his head.

The boy stamped on the ground with impatience, and, running back, seized Prudence's hand, and gently pulled her forward.

"Plymout'!" he said, in his strange accent.

The children looked at each other.

"We might as well try him," said Joel.

"'THOU ART COME BACK TO ME — THE WARMTH OF MY HEART, THE SUNLIGHT OF MY WIGWAM!' EXCLAIMED MASSASOIT." (SEE PAGE 62.)

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The boy clapped his hands together, and ran on before them into the forest. It was a weary journey, over bogs and fallen trees, and seemed three times as long as when they had come. A wasp once stung Prudence on the cheek, making her cry out with pain; but quick as thought the little Indian caught up a pellet of clay, and plastered it upon the wound, and, marvelous to relate, before many minutes the sharp pain had quite gone away.

The woods seemed gradually to grow a little more open, and pretty soon they heard the distant tinkle of a cow-bell. At last (Prudence held her breath for fear it might not be true) they emerged suddenly into the clearing, and home lay before them.

They found they had made a complete circle since they started.

Their little guide stooped and picked up a gaudy-colored feather from the ground. He examined it closely, and then he shouted aloud, and began to run toward the storehouse as fast as his sturdy legs could carry him.

"I want to see mother," said Prudence, half crying with fatigue; so they ran all together across the clearing.

All this while the feast had been progressing. About noontime the great Massasoit, chief of the Indian tribe called the Wampanoags, had emerged from the forest with all his tallest braves in single file behind him. They wore their best beaver-skins, and their heads were gay with nodding feathers. They were received at the door of the storehouse by their English entertainers, who also wore the bravest attire that Puritan custom allowed. They gave the braves a hearty welcome.

Within, the long table fairly groaned with abundance of good cheer; for the housewives had vied with one another to provide the fattest game and the daintiest dishes that Dutch or English housewifery had taught them.

After asking a blessing, they all sat down, the stalwart colonists and their fair-haired women side by side with the taciturn Indians. The white men felt that the best way to thank God for the harvest was to share it with their dark-skinned brethren, who had first taught them to plant and raise the maize which now furnished the table.

Governor Bradford sat at the head of the table. He hoped much from this feast; first, that it might cement the friendship between the colonists and their Indian neighbors, the Wampanoags; and, second, that the news of it might induce the neighboring tribes, which were still partly hostile, to live in peace with the settlers. But though food and talk passed blithely round among the other guests, the governor saw, with growing dismay, that the great Massasoit sat frowning and depressed. The governor was not long in learning the cause. The interpreter, observing the governor's uneasiness, whispered in his ear that in a recent war with the Narragansetts, Massasoit's only child, a boy, was missed and was thought to have been taken prisoner, and of course put to death, after the cruel savage custom.

Toward the end of the feast, drink was served to every guest. For the first time Massasoit showed animation. He seized his cup, and lifted it in the air, and cried aloud in his native tongue, as he sprang to his feet:

"May plague and famine seize the Narragansetts!"

At that very moment the house-door opened, and a pretty group appeared upon the threshold. Two English children stood there, as fair and rosy as the May-time, and between them a dark, lithe little Indian, with sparkling eyes.

Prudence ran straight to her mother.

Massasoit paused and trembled; then, as his cup fell and shivered upon the ground, he crossed the room in one stride, and caught the Indian boy in his arms, looking at him as if he could never see enough.

Governor Bradford knew in an instant that the lost child had been restored, even without the Indian warrior's shout of triumph, and Massasoit's passionate exclamation: "Light of my eyes — staff of my footsteps! — thou art come back to me — the warmth of my heart, the sunlight of my wigwam!"

The rejoicing was so great that no one thought of chiding Joel and Prudence for their disobedience. The governor himself gave Joel a large slice of pudding, and Prudence told all her adventures, throned upon her father's knee, wearing around her neck a string of wampum which the grateful Massasoit had hung there.

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"And, oh!" she exclaimed, "while the Indian boy was dancing for Joel and me, I looked out to sea, and I saw such a wonderful bird — a great white bird, flying along close to the water, and rising up and down. It was many times greater than the swans in Amsterdam!"

"Was it, my little maid?" said the good governor, laying his hand on her head, and then he exchanged a keen look with Prudence's father, saying nothing more. But when the guests had departed, bearing home the Indian boy in triumph, none was so early as the governor to reach the seashore; and it was his call that brought the colonists to see the good ship "Fortune" (Prudence's "great white bird") already rounding the point, and making ready to cast anchor in Plymouth harbor.

Ah, then indeed the great guns rang out from the shore to hail the ship, and the ship's cannon boomed a quick reply, and the whole little town was full and running over with glad welcome for the second English vessel to land upon our Massachusetts coast.

In the evening a happy circle gathered round the fire in the house of Prudence's father, and there was eager talk, for all had much to learn and to tell.

"I know now," said Joel to Prudence, as they sat side by side, "I know now what Thanksgiving means. It means plenty to eat."

Prudence looked at the dear faces around her, at Mehitable's sweet smile, and at the shining eyes of John Andrews, for he had been a passenger by the Fortune.

"Perhaps," she replied; "but I think, Joel, that we have Thanksgiving because we are so glad to be all together once more."

This first Thanksgiving happened long ago, but out of it all our later ones have grown; and when we think of the glad meetings of long-parted parents and sons and daughters, of the merry frolics with brothers and sisters and cousins, which come upon Thanksgiving Day, in spite of our bountiful dinner-tables we shall agree with Prudence that it is the happy family party which makes the pleasure, after all.

Bow-wow, little dog, have you any name?
Yes sir, two, but they don't mean the same,
One from my master, he calls me "Champ",
And one from the neighbors, they call me "Scamp."

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